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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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SUBJECT: "Vegetables in Good Supply" ... Information from officials of the Production and Marketing Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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With the arrival of spring, there are plenty of vegetables on the market to match the mettle of the days. You who are watching the family budget and saving money for vacation trips and household furnishings will select these vegetables that appear in abundance and are more reasonably priced. Also you will be assuring more scarce foods for shipment overseas.

One of the vegetables in good supply is spinach ... that green noted for its Vitamin A. At present, most of the crop is coming from Texas where the soil is especially well adapted to the growth of crisp, dark green spinach. Texas ships out thousands of carloads of spinach to all parts of the country from November through March. Arkansas, the Norfolk area of Virginia, and Oklahoma will be distributing spinach during April, and when this supply thins out, home grown spinach should be available.

You won't have any difficulty finding crisp, fresh spinach either. The vegetable is packed in bushel baskets and loaded in refrigerator cars that speed it to its farthest destination in five to eight days.

As for spinach preparation, the experts advise cutting off the root before the washing job. Then use two pans of water. The trick here is to lift the spinach from one pan of clear water to another until the leaves are free of all grit. To save the vitamin content, cook the spinach in very little water and in a covered pan over a low fire until the leaves are

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tender. Some of the more tender leaves may be used raw in the salad bowl. They add color to a tossed salad or can be served by themselves with a French or 1000 Island dressing.

Cauliflower is also on the plentiful vegetable list and just about all of the crop is now from California. Like cabbage, cauliflower is noted for its Vitamin C content ... especially if it is eaten raw. So for the relish dish, add small cauliflower-lets with carrot and celery strips and radishes. Served raw the flowerlets add a color contrast to green salads. And when it comes to cooking time, 10 to 15 minutes is all you need for the flower segments. The shorter the cooking time the whiter the vegetable will be and the more food value saved.

You can certainly list celery as another popular and most plentiful addition to your vegetable plate. The two varieties you're now seeing on the market are Golden Heart and Pascal. The Golden Heart is the blanched type from Florida ... the state which supplies most of our winter and spring celery. Pascal celery, recognized by its green color is moving from Florida and California. In the last ten years, California has been shipping chiefly Pascal, and Florida is tending to increase its acreage of this variety also. It seems that in years past consumers preferred the white variety, but are losing their prejudice against green celery. And Pascal does rate for tenderness and meaty flesh ... also it's less stringy.

The inner branches of the stalk are good for out of hand eating or in salads. The slightly coarser outer branches are excellent in soup or in bread dressings with meat, or in combination with other cooked vegetables. And if you want to add some root vegetables, to your moderate price list, there are beets, parsnips, turnips and rutabagas.

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